

THE *π γ δ*
 SUN *standing still*
 IN THE *1016. L. 15.*
 Days of *2* J O S H U A,

Rationally accounted for.

By *A. O.* LL. D. *Q. a*
κ.

"Ἡελίος ——— ἀλλὰ ῥηῖται
 Δίφρον ἐπὶ σήσας, τὰ δὲ φάσα μηκύνουσαι.

CALL. ad Dianam



L O N D O N,

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THE

SUN

OF

THE

OF

TO

BY

This QUESTION answered :

*Did the SUN stand still in the
Days of Joshua?*

IT would be a Pleasure to me, to know your *real* Intention in putting this *Question* into my hand: *viz.* Whether it be to throw me into an Embarras, or to gain Satisfaction to your self? If the former; I assure you, *Sir!* I shall lose no Reputation by not succeeding in the Enquiry: For all I have hitherto seen written upon the Subject, seems to be very obscure and entangled. If the latter; you make me too great a Compliment, in supposing that I, unfurnished as I am, should be sufficient to unravel a Difficulty, which some of the wisest Men know not what to make of, and which others the most learned have not been able to put in a clear

Light. However, as you profess your self my Friend, it would be a kind of Injustice to question your Sincerity, except I had discovered something before *deceitful* in your Conduct; and therefore to shew you the Command you have over me, I shall read over the sacred Text as carefully as I can, consider it impartially, and give you my Opinion, without following any Authority but my own private Judgment: For I have frequently observed, that there is no Way so likely to mislead a Man in Researches of this Nature, as giving up his Reason to an implicit Credulity, the High Road of Stupidity and Ignorance.

BUT first give me leave to remark on your part, that to make a Question, whether the *Sun* stood still in the Days of *Joshua*, looks like an Objection issuing out from the Breast of an Infidel, against the Truth of Reveal'd Religion; and I know not whether, in these Times of Obloquy and Reproach, some warm and unwary Head may not load you with the Odium
for

for asking the Question, and *me* for answering it in the manner proposed ; seeing it is expressly said in holy Writ, That at the Word of *Joshua* the Sun *did stand still* and the Moon *stayed*. And yet I profess I cannot see, as untowardly as it looks, but an honest, sober, well-minded Christian, one who is a Lover of Truth and a Follower of Righteousness, may be allowed to make it ; without giving any Offence, or designing any, especially to such Persons, as will give themselves leave to think : And as for those that will not, let *them* stand accountable for their own Prejudice, Carelessness or Folly ; but let not a fair Enquirer suffer in the Opinion of the World, only for his Search after Truth, and his Desire of finding it.

THE Reason why it has not been hitherto found, seems to be, because they that have gone before me have generally *begg'd the Question*, and have then been put to their Shifts *to support the Consequence*. A late very learned Author has labour'd this Point with abundance of Thought and Study,

Study, and with a Fund of Reading hardly to be equal'd ; and yet has too apparently fail'd of Success. To prove this Fact miraculous, he founds himself upon this Position : *viz.* " It is highly improbable, " I might say merely impossible, that *Joshua* should attempt to record *such a* " *Miracle* as this, if it had not been done." I suppose, he did not see the Fallacy of this kind of Arguing.----That *Joshua* has recorded this, I think is not disputed ; neither is it disputed, whether what *Joshua* has recorded be true or no ; for, no doubt, every thing in Scripture is divinely true : The Question is, Whether he has recorded this *standing still of the Sun* as a miraculous Fact ; which this Gentleman takes for granted, but others think has not been proved, and who can say when it will be ?

IF the Account we have in Scripture of this supposed Fact be *literally* true, it is no doubt the most amazing and stupendous Miracle that was ever wrought by the Hand of the Almighty, excepting that of
creating

creating the World out of nothing; because by this means, the whole Heavens, and all the Host of them, were not only stopt, but may be said to have been in some measure diverted from their first establish'd Course. The Sun *stood still*, and the Moon *stayed*; and if we do not suppose the same of all the other heavenly Bodies, (and yet I do not see, we have any Authority for so doing) the whole Frame and Motion of the Heavens must have been strangely jumbled, and all the prior Observations and Rules of Astronomy thrown into the greatest Confusion, not to say, lost for ever. But if it be *not literally true*, it is then no Miracle at all, nor ought any longer as such to be regarded by us. Between these Positions, the Difference is very wide and distant: They are diametrically opposite one to another, and in the first View of 'em clash by a mutual Contradiction: Inasmuch, that let whichsoever of them prove true, the other must be false, and cannot but drop into nothing for want of Evidence to support it. Now which of them is either the
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one or the other, that is, true or false, can only be known by a Freedom of Thought, and a Preciseness of Enquiry.

'Tis certain, Miracles are the true and genuine Evidences of Reveal'd Religion, without which we should have no Reason to receive it, or to believe it, as coming from God, however worthy it might be of his Moral Perfections; indeed if it was not thus worthy, Miracles could not make it so, nor would they then be any Evidence; but without them, the purest Revelation could not be distinguish'd from natural Knowledge, tho' it should come recommended as the best Means to Virtue. It is the Divine Power that establishes the Divine Mission, and gives Authority to the Divine Message. So our Lord: *If you believe not me, believe the Works.* And therefore there is no Question, but the Truth of the Miraculousness of the Facts may be always proved, by plain and unprejudiced Reason, judging impartially of those Facts and the Circumstances relating to them. Where this cannot be proved,
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by some undeniable Circumstance or other in the Relation, there the Fact is not to be deem'd miraculous, or not truly so, but must be understood and interpreted differently; either as no Real Fact, or as a Common one, which only happen'd regularly, or according to the established Course of Nature. And consequently as such Fact, whether real or pretended, if not miraculous, can be of no Use to support a Revelation; so Revelation can be no Sufferer by its being given up as no Miracle, if upon just Enquiry it proves to be none. The *Truth* of Revelation cannot possibly depend on mere Fancy or Fiction, but on *real, undoubted, and substantial* Evidence; of which there is a Sufficiency in holy Writ, without needing to borrow Help from any improbable or pretended Wonder,

THE real Miracles of Scripture, or such Facts I mean as may be clearly proved to be miraculous, have always been wrought as Attestations of some Divine Mission or Message: Such were the Miracles of *Moses*,

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such

such were those of *Jesus Christ*, and such were those of all the *Prophets*; without so much as one Exception, that I know of. This, *of the Sun standing still*, has not apparently this Foundation: There is no Divine Mission or Message, which it is brought to attest. And this Circumstance alone makes it look questionable, whether it be a Miracle or not, and whether it is not to be taken in some other Sense or Meaning. This seeming Uncertainty is, I say, enough to justify an Enquiry into the Circumstances of it; and, even to give a Suspicion or Doubt at present, whether the Fact be truly *miraculous*, or whether it be so much as a *real* Fact, in order to prove whether it be one or no, or in what Sense we ought to understand it.

THERE is another Presumption seemingly against it, which is this: This Miracle, if it was one, was *not done in a Corner*, but in the Face of the whole World: All Men then living were Witnesses of it, and the Duration of it was so long, that it could not pass without a general Observation.

vation. In short, it must have raised the Curiosity of all learned Men in every Nation upon Earth, not only to have observed it, but also to have recorded it, for the Use and Instruction of Posterity : But there is confessedly, no Traces, no Footsteps, of any such Wonder, in any History in the World, but in this of the *Jews* only. Even in *Egypt*, a neighbouring Nation to the Land of *Canaan*, which of all others was the earliest in Learning, and the most famed for it, long before this thing happened ; as well as for their Observations of the Heavens, and also for their Worship of the Heavenly Bodies ; for 'tis with Reason supposed, they adored *the Sun*, under the known Hieroglyphic of an Ox, their chief Image or Idol : Yet among them, I say, so prepared, and so disposed, to have known the Truth of such a Fact, and to have recorded it, there was never found the least Remains of any such Tradition.

INDEED *Herodotus*, the most ancient Greek Historian extant, of great Reputation and good Authority in the learned

World, is observed to have taken Notice of one peculiar Oddity of Opinion among that People, *viz.* That the Sun had *twice* since the Creation risen in the West, and set in the East: But as the *Rising* and *Setting* of the Sun, tho' supposed in contrary Points of the Heavens to its usual Course, is a Phænomenon quite different, and of another Nature, to its *standing still*, the one implying Motion the other Rest; this could not possibly have any Relation to the Fact we are now treating of; but seems to have been rather borrowed from the going back of the Sun in *Hezekiah's* Time; if it be any thing more than a mere Fable, to catch the Unwary and to amaze the Ignorant. Of equal Authority is that of the Heavens *blushing*, and the Sun *standing still*, when *Atreus* King of *Mycenæ* entertain'd his Brother *Thyestes* with a Banquet made of the Flesh of his own Children: For this is certainly no more than a poetical Fiction, design'd at first by *Statius*, to express the greater Horror and Detestation of such a cruel and inhuman Action.

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AND as there is no Remains of this in heathenish Story, (for 'tis in vain to think of establishing Truth on imaginary Principles) so neither is there any thing like it, that I remember, throughout all holy Writ. The thing just mentioned, I mean, the Shadow going back on the Sun-dial of *Abaz*, in the Time of *Hezekiah* King of *Judah*, was indeed a Miracle, wrought in Attestation of a Divine Message; but, without any Resemblance of this. We have reason to believe, it was merely local; and therefore could not be effected by any Stop of the Sun, but by an extraordinary Interposition of Divine Power carrying the Shadow only back, and not that heavenly Body. For tho' it is once said in *Isaiab*, that *the Sun went back ten Degrees*, this is to be understood of the Rays or *Shining* of the Sun only; because in many other Places, there is mention only made of the Shadow going back. The Scripture represents it in this manner: *The Prophet cried unto the Lord, and the Lord brought the SHADOW ten Degrees backward,*

ward, by which it had gone down in the Dial of Abaz. Observe: Only, in the Dial of Abaz. For this was a Miracle wrought for *Hezekiah's* sake, and purely for his Conviction; and therefore may be justly supposed to have appeared only in the Place where he himself was, ready to observe the Wonder, as well as to admire and praise the Mercy of God to him.

IT is certain at least, it was not seen nor observed in other Countries. For no sooner was it reported and spread abroad, as a miraculous Work in favour of *Hezekiah*, to assure him of a Prolongation of his Life; but the King of *Babylon* sent an Ambassage to *Hezekiah*, not only to compliment him on his Recovery, but also to enquire of the Wonder that was done in the Land: That is, to know for certain, whether what was reported by common Fame, of the Shadow going back ten Degrees in the Sundial of *Abaz*, was true or no. Now, the King of *Babylon* had had no Occasion to have done this thing, had the Miracle appeared

peared all the World over, as it did in the Presence of *Hezekiah*; for then, every Sun-dial would have shewn the same. 'Tis true, some have thought this Ambassage was only to enquire, whether this Wonder, tho' universal, was foretold by *Isaiah* before it came to pass: But there is no Ground in Scripture, which is our *only sure* Guide, for that Supposition. It is expressly said, they came to enquire of the *Wonder* it self, and not of the *Prediction* of it; tho' it was impossible, they should be informed of the Certainty of the one, without being let into the Knowledge of the other. In a Word, the Case was this: *Babylon* was the chief City of *Chaldea*, and the *Chaldeans* being in those Days the greatest Astronomers in the World, they were led by a Curiosity common to all learned Men to make this Enquiry, that they might improve their Knowledge in things of that Nature, which so signally appertained to the brightest Luminary of the Heavens; which was not only the Object of their Philosophy, but of their Devotions also.

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AND it must be said, the Wonder was the same and the Miracle as great, and the Force of its Evidence as strong and convincing to *Hezekiah*, supposing *the Shadow only* went back ten degrees, as if the Sun it self had done so. He had only desired, that *the Shadow* might go back in the Sundial of *Abaz*: He had therefore no more to expect, nor any more to do than to observe the Motion of the Shadow there, and if he saw that return ten Degrees, let the Means it was done by be what it will, it was the same thing to him: His Desire was answer'd in a way contrary to the Course of Nature, the Miracle was equally wrought, and his Faith sufficiently establish'd. And as God has no need to go out of the way, or round about, to work any Miracle, so 'tis not to be questioned but he always acts by the easiest, the nearest, and the shortest Methods, as being most consistent with his absolute Power and all-seeing Wisdom; and as 'tis plain he could work the Miracle as truly, and as sufficiently for the intended purpose,

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by bringing back the *Shadow only*, as by altering or stopping the Course of *the Sun* and the whole Frame of Heaven, there is no Question to be made, but this was the Way by which it was effected.

INDEED it may be supposed, that if the Sun did actually go back, it might be so suddenly done, and the whole Heavens restored again to their usual State in so short a Space of time, that it was not observed, nor well could be, but by him who foretold it, and by those to whom it was foretold. But in answer hereunto: Had this been really the Case, what Occasion had *Hezekiah* to object against the Sun's going *forward* ten Degrees rather than *backward* so many, when the Prophet gave him the Choice of either, for a Sign, or Assurance, of his Recovery? For certainly, it would have been as much a Miracle, and equally against the natural Course of the Sun, to go *on a sudden* ten Degrees forward as ten Degrees backward; and might have no less confirmed his Belief one way than the other, that

GOD had actually sent the Message by his Prophet, and would undoubtedly make good his Promise. But said *Hezekiah*, *It is a small thing, for the Shadow to go down ten Degrees* ; (he meant, leisurely and gradually, as the Sun always goes) there is no Wonder, no Miracle in that, sufficient for Conviction : *Nay, but let the Shadow return back ten Degrees* ; and, *the Lord brought the Shadow back* : That is, leisurely and gradually, according to the Sun's usually apparent Motion ; so that he had Time to observe and consider it, without any Possibility of Mistake, notwithstanding the little Space of Time a Degree might be : Undoubtedly much less, than one of our Hours at present ; because 'tis here supposed the Sun might *still have gone down ten Degrees*, tho' it had *already gone down ten Degrees*, which the Lord brought it back ; and we are sure, 'tis impossible in the Nature of Things, that the Sun should go down twenty Hours at once.

FROM this we justly conclude, that the Miracle was *real*, and not a Trick imposed ;

imposed; but then it must be said, it still continues *local*, or done only in one Part of the World and not in any other; and as this is an Instance in no wise parallel to the Sun's *standing still for about a whole Day*, in the Days of *Joshua*; so the Truth and Certainty of that Miracle cannot possibly be strengthen'd or confirmed by this.

BUT let us now consider it more particularly, I mean the *seeming Miracle* of the Sun's standing still; for so give me leave to speak of it, till we see whether it be a *real Miracle* or no. But be that as it will, this we are sure of; that what was said and done was in the Sight and Hearing of *Israel*, that is, of the Army of *Israel*, or of the chief Men of it; so that in the Eyes and Ears of so many, there could be no Deception or Imposture in the Case: And therefore, this Part of Scripture undoubtedly contains a true Account of that Transaction; and there is nothing wanting here, but to understand rightly what it was. Now this I think may be learned clearly and fully, from the very Words of

the Passage it self, without much Difficulty or Perplexity of Thought ; and without travelling into ancient *Greece*, much less so far as *China*, to pick up heathenish Fables in order to support it : For I take it for Truth, That in all Things dark and intricate, the Scriptures are the clearest and best Expofitor of themselves.

BECAUSE it is said, That *the Sun stood still in the midst of Heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole Day*, it has been the general Opinion, that it did *really* stand still so long as to make *One Day Two*. However, I think it is hardly concludable from that Expression, that the Sun did *not go down* as usual at the End of the Day : For 'tis not directly said, the Sun *did not go down*, but only, that it *stood still* and *did not hasten to go down* ; which are very different Forms of speaking, and may justly admit to be interpreted differently. To *stand and loiter* in the Way is one thing, and *not to move at all* for a whole Day is quite another : Just as different as going backward is, to not going forward ;

forward ; and 'tis certain, a Man may not go forward, without going backward at all. But this I introduce, not for a Proof, but to furnish an Hint only ; which a Man of Thought and Reflection, will easily perceive what Use to make of.

ABOUT two hundred and fifty Years before *Christ*, according to Dean *Prideaux* ; or two hundred, according to the marginal Chronology of *our Bibles* ; the *Jews*, or some of them, had quite another Notion of the Matter, to what we have now. 'Tis left upon record, that they did not think the Sun *stood still*, but *went back* from the midst of Heaven where it first stopt, and then returning made *one Day as long as two*. This indeed is against holy Writ ; but, so the Author of *Ecclesiasticus* : *Did not the Sun go back by his [Joshua's] means ? And was not one Day as long as two ?* But with all due Respect to that venerable Author, besides this apparent Contradiction of the true Word of God, he seems to be a little out in his Astronomical Calculations ; and has unwarily

warily ventured upon making Queries, which are certainly not unanswerable. Had he truly considered, where it was and when, that the Sun is said to have *stood still* on the Word of *Joshua*, 'tis my Opinion he would not have told us, that it *went back*, but he would have kept it *standing* in the same Place, as our Modern Commentators choose to do; for otherwise, he must have reversed his Terms of Speech, and have said, *the Night was doubled, and one Day at least entirely lost*. But by this means, he would have disconcerted the whole Scope and Design, which it is supposed *Joshua* had in asking the Miracle, and GOD in granting it.

WHEN *Joshua* said, *Sun! stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon! in the Valley of Ajalon*, there is no Doubt but he saw them both in that Position; the one upon *Gibeon*, the other in the Valley of *Ajalon*. Now *Gibeon* and *Ajalon* lay almost in a direct Line, East and West one to another; so that *Joshua* was at this Time between them, warring against the
Ammo-

Ammorites, under the West Side of the Hill *Gibeon* : For, the City was situate upon the Hill, from which it took its Name. The Moon therefore was in the West, probably not long after its Full, just a-going down, and seemingly at a great Distance from *Joshua*, almost upon the Borders of the *Great*, now the *Mediterranean*, Sea ; for there it was that *Ajalon* lay, in the Tribe of *Dan* : But the Sun appeared very near him, just arising behind Mount *Gibeon* ; under the West Side of which (as I said) he was fighting with the Enemy, and at the very Time they began to flee before him. For it is said, he went up *all Night* from *Gilgal*, and came upon them *suddenly*, that is, whilst it was yet dark, unseen and unexpected, and chased them along the Way that goeth up to *Beth-boron*, that is, Northwestward from *Gibeon*, according to the Situation of the two Places. So that he himself must needs have come on the South Side of the City, and have been with his Army in the Engagement, as before described, on the West of *Gibeon* ;
and

and consequently saw the Sun to appear just above the Hill, when it arose upon the Earth.

Now viewing it in this geographical Position: Had the Sun *gone back*, as the ancient Author abovementioned supposes, it would have been so far from being of any Service to *Joshua* in the Pursuit of his Enemies, that it would again have concealed it self under the Disc of the Earth, and have greatly favour'd the Escape of the *Ammorites*, by making (contrary to what is intimated) *one Night as long as two*; and would have been also, so far from *not going down*, that it would have gone down *immediately*, not into the West indeed, but backward into the East again, from whence it was just risen. This then being contrary to plain Matter of Fact, as well as Divine Testimony, it can be of no Authority towards *proving* this supposed *standing still* of the Sun to be really Miraculous: Nay, it *disproves* the very thing it should be brought to vindicate. *Did not the Sun*, saith he, *go back by his means?*

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And was not one Day as long as two? Strangely inconsistent! For had the Sun *gone back*, there had been no Day at all; and if the Day was *as long as two*, certainly the Sun did not go back. The *Queries* mutually overturn and destroy themselves. It is true, the Miracle would have been the same, I mean equally as great, had the Sun gone back a Day, as if it had stood still a Day; or one Night made two, as one Day two: But that is not the Thing in question. Not, whether one Miracle was as great as the other; but, whether there was any Miracle at all? In a Word, whether the Sun did really stand still or no?

IF it did stand still, 'tis certain the Occasion of it was extraordinary: GOD would by no means put all Nature out of its Course for nothing, nor do so great a Thing for the sake of any Trifle. Some great Motive it must be, that could carry the Almighty to cause so surprizing an Effect; for we cannot suppose him exerting such a Power, so vastly surpassing all the Methods

thods of common Providence, for no purpose, nay, not for a little purpose. Something exceeding urgent, and absolutely necessary for atchieving some mighty End, must require it : Something in which the Honour of GOD was greatly concerned, as well as the Interest and Safety of his People. But nothing of this appears in the Context. There is no mention of any thing, for the sake of which this great Miracle was done : Nor the least Intimation given by which we may possibly guess, for what End it should be done : And I'm sure where the sacred Text is silent, we have little Authority for saying any thing. It is indeed said, *The Sun stood still, and the Moon stayed, TILL the People had avenged themselves on their Enemies* ; but surely ! this is another thing than saying, *That the Sun stood still and the Moon stayed, that the People MIGHT avenge themselves on their Enemies* ; as if this could not have been done, except the Sun had *stood still* and the Moon *stayed*. For my staying till a Thing be done, is no Argument of my Prefence being necessary

fary for the doing of it. I may stay as a Looker on, without affording any Assistance.

ON the contrary, it is very apparent, there was really no such Occasion for this imagined Miracle; for before *Joshua* bid the Sun *stand still*, all the Danger and Difficulty of the Battle was over. He spoke these Words in the Morning of that Night in which he had come upon the *Amorites* suddenly, and slain them *with a very great Slaughter*. It was, when the Conquest was made, the Enemy quite routed, and he and his Men in full pursuit of them, that *he spake unto the Lord, and said in the Sight of Israel, &c.* Nay, at a Time when he was in no Fear of their rallying back upon him; for the Lord had said to him before the Engagement, (very probably upon his enquiring of him by *Urim* and *Thummim*, whether he should go up in Defence of *Gibeon* or not) *Fear them not; for I have delivered them into thine Hand: There shall not a Man of them stand before thee.* Upon which 'tis added, *So he came upon them*

suddenly, and the Lord discomfited them before Israel.

Now judge, whether it was at all necessary in itself, or reasonable for *Joshua* to expect, or even to desire, that God should stop the Sun in his Course, that the People *might be avenged* on their Enemies; when he had already actually *delivered them into their Hands*, and had promised that a Man of them *should not stand before them*. Was not the Promise of GOD sufficient? Or did *Joshua* distrust it, that he still called out for a miraculous Assistance? Certainly, it is the greatest Absurdity in the World, to suppose GOD working any Miracle, much more so stupendous an one as this, without a sufficient Reason or real Necessity, of his working it. Even an Heathen Poet would have been laugh'd at, had he introduced a God into his Scene, except the Difficulty appeared to be otherwise unsurmountable.

'Tis true, there is something added, that at first Sight may seem to obviate this
Absur-

Absurdity, as it looks like a Confirmation
 of the other Opinion ; for 'tis said, *And
 there was no Day like that, before or after
 it, that the Lord hearken'd to the Voice of
 a Man.* But this certainly cannot mean,
 that the Lord before this had *never hear-*
ken'd to the Voice of a Man, or *never* to
 the Voice of a Man in that manner ; and
therefore, there was *no Day like it*, before
 or after it : For, he had often hearken'd
 to the Voice of *Moses*, to do by *his* Hands
 many and great Wonders. Nor can it
 mean, that the Lord had never hearken'd
 to the Voice of a Man, so as to stop the
 Sun in his Course before, tho' we are sure
 he never had done it ; because the Scrip-
 ture it self gives another Reason, why there
 was *no Day like that before or after it*,
 which is, *for the Lord fought for Israel.*
 That is, in all *Joshua's* Time, neither be-
 fore nor after it, did God so signalize him-
 self in favour of his People, as he did up-
 on that Occasion. For when the *Amo-*
rites fled before *Israel*, and were many
 of them, no doubt, likely to escape by that
 means, God providentially drove them
 back

back again upon the Sword of the Conqueror, by so furious a Storm of Hail, that there were more of them died *with the Hail-stones*, than those which the Children of *Israel* slew *with the Sword*. And as there is no question, but *Joshua* had pray'd to GOD, that he would make good his Promise to him, and now deliver his Enemy into his Hand; so it may be justly said, GOD had never so apparently hearken'd to the Voice of a Man, as he did then to *Joshua*, when, fighting for *Israel* against the Enemy, he cast down great Stones from Heaven upon them that they died. To this perhaps the Psalmist alludes, when he says, in describing the manifold Works of GOD: *The Lord also thundred in the Heavens, and the Highest gave forth his Voice, Hailstones and Coals of Fire; yea, he sent out his Arrows and scatter'd them, he shot out his Lightnings and discomfited them.*

Now it was common on such signal Victories as these, for the ancient religious Heroes immediately to celebrate the Praises of

of GOD at the Head of their Armies. When *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians* were overwhelmed in the Red-Sea, *then sang Moses and the Children of Israel this Song unto the Lord*: So, upon the Defeat of *Jabin* King of *Canaan*, it is said, *in that Day sang Deborah, and Barak the Son of Abinoam*: And again *David*, *in the Day that the Lord delivered him out of the Hand of all his Enemies, and out of the Hand of Saul, spake unto the Lord the Words of this Song*. In like manner *Joshua*, upon this surprizing Victory, being sacredly inspired with poetic Rapture, breaks out into a Song of Praise and Thanksgiving to the most high GOD. For immediately after it is told in the sacred History, how *the Lord fought for Israel out of Heaven*, it follows: *Then* (meaning, at that Instant) *spake Joshua unto the Lord, in the Day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the Children of Israel*. What *he spake*, is not here fully recorded; (for this seems to be a defective Copy, or a sort of Abridgment of the Song of *Joshua*) but we are referred for a farther Account of it

it to the Book of *Jasher*, that is, to the Book of the Upright, the good and great Men who had been heroical in their Generation, and done signal Services to their Country; wherein, I question not, it was inserted at large. For this Book was not a Book written by any one Man, but by many, at different Times, and on sundry Occasions, being a Collection of Divine Poems, added from Time to Time; as is plain, from *David's* Song on the Death of *Saul* and *Jonathan* being a Part of it, tho' composed near four hundred Years after this of *Joshua*. But this and that being both imperfect, or in Part only recorded in sacred Writ; therefore it is we are referred to *that Book* (now lost) for them particularly.

HOWEVER, there is enough remaining of this Song of Triumph, to shew us the Dignity of *Joshua's* Thoughts, and the Loftiness of his Expression; who, amidst his Divine Praises, by a bold Figure of Speech, bespeaks *the Sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the Moon in the Valley of Ajalon;*

jalou; not because he wanted Day-light, or was in any Fear of wanting it, *to subdue his Enemies*, (which is a low, trifling, and groundless Imagination; for this was spoken *in the Morning*, as I observed before, and at a Time too when the Enemy *was routed*, and he had a whole Day before him wherein to finish the Conquest) but that these heavenly Bodies might be Spectators of so great a Victory, and *stand and wonder* at the unspeakable Goodness of GOD to him. Not unlike the Psalmist, when he summons all the Host of Heaven to join with him in the Praises of GOD: *Praise him, Sun and Moon, praise him all ye Stars! Praise him ye Heavens, and ye Waters that are above the Heavens!* For certainly, it is not more a Miracle for inanimate Things *to stand and wonder*, than it is for them *to rejoice and sing*. In short, the Expressions are both of them strongly figurative, and surprizingly beautiful.

ACCORDINGLY, the Sun and Moon are here represented as seiz'd with Admiration, and spending the whole Day in Won-

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der and Astonishment. Which Sense is sufficiently confirm'd by the *Hebrew Text*, (as our Bibles have carefully preserved it, on the Margin) which is not, *Sun! stand thou still*, but, *Sun! be silent*; And the *Sun was silent*; as if he was struck dumb and speechless, with the Surprize of so great an Action. All which is purely poetical, and equally sublime as that in the Song of *Deborah*: *They fought from Heaven, the Stars in their Courses fought against Sisera*. By which no more is meant, says our best Commentator, than that the Battle against *Sisera* held out till Night, and the Brightness of the Stars was favourable to the Victory. By a Parity then of Reasoning, when 'tis said, *the Sun stood still in the midst of Heaven, and did not hasten to go down for a whole Day*; 'tis no more than saying in plain *English Verse*, borrowed from the *Greek of Callimachus*:

*Then stopping short, the Sun did wondring
stay,
Forgot himself, and lengthen'd out the Day.*

THUS,

THUS, *Sir!* you have my Promise completed: I have given you my private Judgment upon this puzzling Passage of Scripture, and have studied Brevity and Clearness as much as possible: But how well I have succeeded in the Interpretation, I must now leave to be decided by your Candor and Impartiality. Had the Church, the Church of *England*, defined this Passage to another Sense, I should then in Duty and Good-manners have declined your Request, and with Modesty and Silence suppress'd my own Thoughts in Deference to hers; but as she has not interposed her Authority, nor laid any such Embargo upon rational Enquiry, I have judg'd of it without Restraint, and spoken my Sentiments without Fear or Scruple.

If they be found true; this Advantage, at least, will accrue to Religion: A dark and difficult Passage is clear'd, an Objection is taken out of the hands of Infidelity, and an Honour is done to the Truth of God by its being render'd plain, rational
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and intelligible. For, the more rational and intelligible any Part of Scripture is explain'd to be; it so much the more, I think, carries with it the Stamp of Divine Authority, as being more agreeable to Divine Wisdom and Goodness.

If what I have said be thought otherwise; I profess my self not so attached to my own Opinion, as to think it infallible: But am ready to give it up again, whenever I shall find a better. For to me, nothing is so sacred as Truth; and as I, in all my Enquiries, am only in Pursuit of that, I rejoice at every Discovery of it, let it come from whom it will, and shall always embrace it with Pleasure, tho' in Contradiction to my self.

F I N I S.